

UNITED NATIONS

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PRICING OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

I. CATEGORIES OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS

1. United Nations publications fall into the following categories:
 - (a) Official records of proceedings;
 - (b) Publications the issue of which by the United Nations is mandatory under international instruments;
 - (c) Publications of a specialized character prepared at the request or with the sanction of an organ of the United Nations;
 - (d) Publications of a non-specialized character designed "to promote ... an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the Organization among the peoples of the world".^{1/}
2. The publications in categories (a), (b) and (c) are issued primarily for official use, whereas those in category (d) are designed for the public. In view of this fundamental difference, the two groups - categories (a), (b) and (c) on the one hand and (d) on the other - will be separately considered for pricing purposes.

II. PRINCIPLES OF PRICING POLICY

A. Publications issued primarily for official use

3. The publications in categories (a), (b) and (c), though issued primarily for official use, are also made available to the public for the following reasons: firstly, publications in categories (a) and (b) are made available in virtue of the democratic principle that the public is entitled to know what is being said or done in its name, there being an obvious analogy between those publications and the records of national legislatures; secondly, publications in category (c) are made

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Annexes, agenda item 41, document A/C.5/L.172.

available partly for the same reason as those in categories (a) and (b) and partly because it is thought proper, as well as being in the interests of the Organization, that the information and ideas contained in United Nations publications should be at the disposal of those members of the public who have a use for them.

4. Having regard to their origins, as defined in paragraph 1, and the purposes for which they are made available to the public, as defined in paragraph 3, it is clear that these publications are not planned or issued with a view to revenue. They are indeed, distributed free of charge on a varying but always considerable scale. Governments are the principal beneficiaries but free copies are also supplied to the Press and other information media, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, individual authorities on the subjects treated, and United Nations depository libraries. These libraries, of which there is at least one, and frequently several, in the territory of each Member State, accept the obligation to make all United Nations publications freely accessible to the public.

5. All these types of free distribution have the approval of the General Assembly and the scale on which they are conducted is believed to be in accordance with its wishes. These have never been precisely stated, but there can be no doubt that for budgetary as well as for other reasons, the General Assembly desires a limit to be set to free distribution, so that the sale of United Nations publications may be correspondingly stimulated.

6. It may also be assumed that Member States would not think it unreasonable that the sale of this class of United Nations publications should be made to yield a profit, provided this could be achieved without defeating the purpose for which such publications are issued and made available to the public. The effect of this proviso is such, however, that the assumption loses much of its force and the opening statement of paragraph 4 retains its validity. For practical purposes, it must be recognized that considerations of profit can play no significant part in determining the price of publications in the group now under consideration.

7. The conclusions reached in the last two paragraphs, namely that these publications are not issued for profit and are not to be distributed free on a greater scale than at present, set the limits within which a basis for the pricing of such publications must be sought.

8. It is stated in paragraph 2 that the publications now under consideration are issued primarily for official use and it may, therefore, be assumed that unless required for such use they would not appear at all. If this assumption is accepted, then it is obvious that all the most expensive items in the production of a book, namely, the cost of the author's services, the cost of setting up the text in type and the cost of any art work that may be needed, are normally incurred without reference to the possibility of sale to the public. In view, therefore, of the conclusion reached in paragraph 6 that considerations of profit can play no significant part in the determination of pricing policy, these items need not normally be taken into account when the appropriate price for a United Nations publication is being calculated. On the other hand, by making the publication available for sale, the Organization incurs a variety of charges which it would not otherwise have had to bear. Though the text has been set up in type for the copies required for official use, additional copies have had to be run off for sale, and marketing on an international scale has had to be organized. A reasonable basic principle for the determination of the retail prices to be charged for these publications would, therefore, seem to be that such prices should cover all costs over and above those incurred in printing the publications concerned to meet official needs, namely, the run-on cost of the copies produced for sale, together with the cost of marketing.^{1/}

9. The application of this principle to each publication individually being impracticable the aim of the responsible service should rather be to ensure that returns from this class of publication, in general, cover the costs specified in the foregoing paragraph. This would allow of a certain elasticity in pricing individual volumes and, in particular, of some upward adjustment in cases in which the strict application of the principle might result in prices conspicuously below those charged by commercial firms for comparable publications. The most expensive elements in book production being left out of account, as stated in paragraph 8, cases in which application of the principle might result in prices in excess of those charged by commercial firms should not arise. Were they to do so the very question of publication would require reconsideration.

^{1/} See Rule 2 (a) below.

10. In the case of these publications, no valid reason can be seen for the use of different criteria for the determination of the prices of the different language versions of the same publication. On the other hand, it is conceivable that to give effect to the principle stated in paragraph 8, or the rules for application introduced in pursuance of it, might result in different prices through disparities in production costs in the areas in which language versions can most conveniently be printed.

B. Publications designed for the public

11. The publications mentioned in paragraph 1 (d) are those issued by the Department of Public Information and, as such, are governed by the basic principles approved by the General Assembly in resolution 595 (VI). In these principles it is stated that "the United Nations cannot achieve the purposes for which it has been created unless the peoples of the world are informed of its aims and activities" through publications as well as by other means. It is further laid down that in the public information activities of the United Nations "free distribution of materials is necessary" but that "as demands increase and whenever it is desirable and possible" the Department of Public Information should "actively encourage the sale of its materials".

12. The practical conclusion to be drawn from these statements of principle is that the General Assembly expects the funds it votes for the publications of the Department of Public Information to be laid out in such a way as to secure the best return in information results, irrespective of other considerations. The publications may be given away free, sold at a nominal or at cost price, or even at what would be their price by ordinary commercial standards. The possible cases and even those regularly occurring are of such variety that the only satisfactory procedure must be a separate decision on each, based upon its special circumstances. Those called upon to carry into effect the principles approved by the General Assembly with regard to information publications should, however, bear in mind that:

- (a) The level of commercial prices must in no circumstances be exceeded;
- (b) The biggest circulation numerically is not necessarily the most effective circulation for information purposes;

(c) In selling or distributing such publications nothing must be done which might impair the dignity of the United Nations in the public eye.

III. RULES FOR THE APPLICATION OF PRICING POLICY

Rule 1. Responsibility for fixing the prices of publications in accordance with the Principles laid down in Part II above shall lie with the Department of Public Information (Sales and Circulation Section).

Rule 2. For the purposes of paragraph 8 of the above Principles:

- (a) "Run-on cost" shall be estimated on the basis of current printing charges and shall represent the cost per unit of paper, press work and binding in respect of the copies added to the press run for sales purposes.
- (b) "Cost of marketing" shall include all costs directly attributable to sales such as the cost of staff engaged in sales activities, the cost of sales promotion, sales agents' commissions and freight and mail charges.

Rule 3. For practical guidance but without prejudice to the application of paragraph 9 of the Principles, the Publications Board shall, from time to time, indicate in terms of average run-on cost the general price level for publications in the categories governed by paragraphs 3-10 above required by the principle stated in the concluding sentence of paragraph 8, and the Department of Public Information (Sales and Circulation Section) shall maintain a schedule of standard prices expressed in United States dollars based thereupon. The schedule of prices in use in the Department of Public Information (Sales and Circulation Section) on 1 June 1956, representing, in general, a price level corresponding approximately to five times the run-on cost, in the case of printed publications in the categories concerned, shall be taken as the point of departure in the application of the present Rules.

Rule 4. The schedule of standard prices maintained by the Department of Public Information (Sales and Circulation Section) under Rule 3 above shall apply to all publications governed by paragraphs 3-10 of the Principles however they may be produced, and the get-up of which is not inferior, for sale purposes, to that of printed publications. In the case of publications produced by processes other than print resulting in an inferior get-up, the standard prices shall be appropriately reduced by the Department of Public Information (Sales and

Circulation Section) provided, however, that the reduction shall not exceed 25 per cent without the express authority of the Publications Board. In this connexion, the criterion for the determination of standard prices under the schedule shall be the size of the publications if printed, not their size when produced by other processes.

Rule 5. The Department of Public Information (Sales and Circulation Section) shall consult the Office of the Controller, as required, on financial arrangements and, in particular, shall obtain its concurrence in any special exchange rates, subject always to the provisions of Rule 6.

Rule 6. In fixing the prices of particular publications the Department of Public Information (Sales and Circulation Section) shall not depart otherwise than in application of paragraph 9 of the Principles from the schedule provided for in Rule 3 above without the authority of the Publications Board, to which any uncertainty concerning the interpretation of these Principles and Rules may be referred.

Rule 7. Each year the Publications Board shall review the pricing of United Nations publications on the basis of a report from the Department of Public Information (Sales and Circulation Section) and of a statement by the Department of Conference Services (Publishing Service) on production costs, with special reference to run-on costs.

Rule 8. The Board may at any time assimilate for the purposes of the present Rules publications governed by paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Principles to those governed by paragraphs 3 to 10 thereof. Otherwise the publications governed by paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Principles shall be priced in accordance with the criteria stated in those paragraphs and irrespective of the schedule of standard prices mentioned in Rule 3 above.
